(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) Modernisation of mining methods (opencast or underground) including improvement of coal quality is a continuous process. This is receiving due attention of the coal industry. Coal industry can consult national as well as international experts|institutions on specific issues, as may be necessary.

Dependence of balance of payments on export performance

*660. DR. B. B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that balance of payments continues to depend crucially on export performance; and

(b) if so, steps taken by Government recently to maintain a strong export growth?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Recognising that international trade is a key component of global economic activity today, the Government have taken a number of steps to encourage and maintain strong export growth. India's trade policy was liberalised in July 1991 to respond to the opportunities and challenges posed by the domestic and international developmeants and coninuously revised thereafter to step up exports. The trade policy liberalised as of 31.3.1995 has aimed at creating a free environment for trade, strengthening the export promotion structure, removing procedural irritants through simplification and streamlning of procedures, increasing export production, improving efficiency and sharpening competitive edge, facilitating input availability, focussing on quality technological upgradation besides introducing and strengthening schemes for export promotion. Efforts have been made to provide cheaper export credit and provide tax exemption on export profits. Export promotion is a continuous process and steps are taken to boost exports in consultation with trade, industry and concerned institutions.

Losses incurred by consumer cooperative societies and wholesale central stores

6720. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 50 per cent of the primary consumer cooperative societies and wholesale central stores of the country at present are incurring losses;

(b) whether non-supply of essential items or delayed supply are the main reasons for the losses;

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to avoid losses on this count; and

(d) what other steps are under consideration of Government to popularise these stores?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main reasons for losses are lack of members participation, lack of democratic functioning, lack of professional management, unplanned business operations, etc. as per the findings of the Expert Committee which was set up to look into the working of consumer cooperatives.

(c) and (d) The Expert Committee which was set up to look into the working of consumer cooperatives has submitted the report on 10th April, 1995. The salient recommendations of the Committee are as follows:—